

bark stands out in pleasing contrast with the darker hued trunks about them. Many of them are exceptionally well formed with full foliage. Their delicacy of forms calls to mind Lowell's admirable tribute:

"Their shadow scarce seems shade, their pattering leaflets
Sprinkle their gathered sunshine o'er my senses
And Nature gives me all her summer confidences."

New York City

A NEW WEED FROM OREGON

JAMES C. NELSON

In the summer of 1920, Mr. William L. Teutsch, County Agricultural Agent for Lake County, Oregon, sent to the herbarium of the Oregon Agricultural College at Corvallis, specimens of a weed which had been found growing in great profusion in a field of alfalfa on the Lerwick ranch, three quarters of a mile north of Lakeview. Dr. Helen M. Gilkey, Curator of the College herbarium, kindly distributed some of these specimens among the other Oregon botanists. The plant was evidently a labiate, and a consultation of Bentham & Hooker's *Genera Plantarum* seemed to place it in *Salvia*; but it was beyond our powers to determine it among the six hundred and more species of that vast genus. We accordingly appealed to the Gray and National Herbaria, and our plant was identified at both of these institutions as *Salvia Aethiopis* L., sometimes known as "African sage," a species previously unknown in Oregon.

Mr. Teutsch writes that the plant was not only very abundant in the heavy loam of the alfalfa-field, where it was actually choking out some of the alfalfa plants, but that it had spread to the adjoining (presumably unirrigated) hillside, and was growing in great profusion on a shallow basaltic soil, "indicating that it was a hardy plant and could withstand great drought," the semi-arid climate of Lake County permitting agricultural operations only with the aid of irrigation. It has continued at the same station until the present year (1922); is very prolific and is spreading rapidly. Mr. Teutsch is of the opinion that it may easily become a very noxious weed, though it has not yet appeared at any other station*. It is a tall coarse plant,

* Since writing this it has been found by Prof. M. E. Peck, at Gossil, Wheeler Co., about 200 miles north of the Lake Co. station

with inconspicuous flowers, densely covered with a shaggy ashy pubescence, in general aspect resembling a thistle more than any of the better-known species of sage.

Linnaeus first described this species in Sp. Pl. 27. 1753, and gives the range as "Illyria, Graecia, Africa." The specific name seems not to have had any reference to the geographical distribution, but to have expressed Linnaeus' belief that this plant is the one referred to by various ancient authors under the name of "Aethiopis." Perhaps the best-known passage is one in Pliny (Nat. Hist. 27:4, 3), which may be roughly translated as follows:

"Aethiopis has many large leaves like those of mullein, and is hirsute from the base. The stem is square, rough, like *arcion* [perhaps a mullein], hollow and many-jointed; the seed is like the bitter vetch (*ervum*), white and paired; the roots are numerous, long, fleshy, soft, and sticky to the taste. The plant turns black when dried and hardens, so that it resembles horn. It grows in Ethiopia, the Trojan Mount Ida, and in Messenia. It is gathered in the autumn and dried for several days in the sun to prevent mould (*situm*). A decoction in vinegar is efficacious in diseases of women, for sciatica, pleurisy and hoarseness. That which comes from Ethiopia is the best, and it is used there as a medicine."

The resemblance to mullein seems to have impressed other writers also—or to have been copied freely. Dioscorides (4:104) says that "Aethiopis has leaves like mullein, hairy and thick"; and Paulus Aegineta, writing several centuries later, repeats (7:3) the "leaves like mullein," and adds: "A decoction of the root is used for sciatica, pleurisy, and spitting blood, and, mixed with honey, for hoarseness." This latter property, suggesting the familiar horehound, or the "sage tea" of our grandmothers, seems to indicate a labiate plant. Whether *Salvia Aethiopis* is really the "Aethiopis" of the ancients can perhaps never be fully demonstrated; but some at least of the commentators and lexicographers have followed Linnaeus in that belief.

It may be of interest to add that another weed of this genus was collected as a grain-field weed in Umatilla County, Oregon by Professor M. E. Peck in the summer of 1921, and was determined by Mr. Bayard Long as *S. sylvestris* L. —a smaller and

less vigorous plant, with more showy flowers. These Mediterranean weeds seem to be finding a very congenial home in Oregon.

Mr. Teutsch writes that the "African sage" was growing with what is known as "Cossack" alfalfa, and suggests that it may have been introduced with the alfalfa seed, "which was originally imported from northern Russia." The word Cossack would seem however to indicate a more southern origin, and the *Salvia* could probably be expected in the vicinity of the Black Sea.

I am indebted to Mr. Teutsch and Dr. Gilkey for specimens and local data, and to Dr. A. S. Pease for the Greek quotations referring to "Aethiopsis." Miss Mary A. Day has kindly verified the citation of original publication.

Salem, Oregon

REVIEWS

Trelease, Plant Materials.*

This is a second edition of the guide to the cultivated woody plants of the eastern United States, made more valuable by page references in the keys. The book starts with four keys to the trees, shrubs, undershrubs and climbers based on leaf and twig characters. Many of the plants may be found in two or more of the keys. From the keys one is carried to the descriptions of genera on the following pages where other keys refer to all species found commonly in cultivation as well as to many of the native ones not often cultivated. Descriptions of the species of course are not possible in a book meant to be carried easily in the pocket. As in the first edition, 1150 species and forms belonging to 247 genera are referred to. This little book should be of great value to those familiar enough with botanical terms to use keys which are easy and accurate. A glossary is given by which the non-botanical may follow through the keys, though we fear they will find it a difficult proceeding.

G. T. H.

*Trelease, William, Plant Materials of Decorative Gardening. The Woody Plants. Pp xliii + 177. 1921. Urbana, Ill. \$1.00.



Nelson, James C. 1922. "A NEW WEED FROM OREGON." *Torrey* 22(5), 86–88.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/100232>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/348829>

Holding Institution

New York Botanical Garden, LuEsther T. Mertz Library

Sponsored by

The LuEsther T Mertz Library, the New York Botanical Garden

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

Rights: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions/>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.